



Gender difference in help seeking behaviour for dating violence among undergraduates of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study carried out an investigation on the gender differences in help-seeking behaviour for dating violence among Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates. Survey research design was adopted in this study, as an instrument entitled, "Dating Violence and Help-Seeking Behaviour" was used to collect data from 591 undergraduates. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentage, frequency counts and t-test. The study concluded that the students experienced dating violence, especially in the form of psychological violence; while majority of female undergraduate students look out for informal help source, which could be responsible for under-reporting and act as barrier for rendering of necessary formal help source. It is therefore recommended that university counsellors should endeavor to create awareness to the students about dating violence and the necessity to ask for help. Also, school management need to establish strategies that promote speaking out, when faced with dating violence and see to it that what is reported are managed as appropriate as possible.

Keywords: Behaviour, Dating violence, Gender, Help-seeking, Undergraduate, University

1. INTRODUCTION

Violence is a problem that affects people of all ages worldwide. Violence, according to the World Health Organization (2013) refers to the deliberate physical power or force usage, whether threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, a group, or a community that either results in or is more likely to result in emotional harm, injury, deprivation and death. Violence can be categorized into three, according to the typology used in the World Report on Violence and Health (WHO, 2013), which is based on the perpetrator of the violent act. They are self-indicted violence, interpersonal violence, and collective violence.

Self-indicted violence refers to any purposeful action that a person takes to harm or kill themselves. Examples of self-directed violence are cutting and suicide (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Collective assault/violence is the intentional use of violence against another group of people to achieve political, economic, or social goals, by individuals who identify as members of a group (be it temporary or permanent identity). In defining interpersonal violence, the two subcategories were considered, which are: (i) Family and intimate partner violence, in which the majority of violence occurs between family members and intimate partners and typically, though not entirely, existing in one's home. (ii) Community violence is when there is conflict between strangers who may or may not know one another; and this occurs most often outside the home. Dating violence is therefore categorized under the intimate type of violence (WHO, 2013).

Dating violence (DV) is arguably the most widespread, but frequently least acknowledged violation of human rights in the world. Notwithstanding, it has recently come to light as a serious social and public health issue affecting young people in Nigeria, and it is alarming among university undergraduates. Thus, dating refers to the activities two people engage in, so as to get to know each other better on a possibly romantic level (Albo, 2011), while "dating violence" refers to a variety of behaviours, such as verbal, physical, sexual and psychological abuse, used by a dating partner to manipulate, gain control over, or threaten the other person (Ekechukwu & Brown, 2014). Dating violence can also be used to make a partner feel unworthy or afraid of their dating partner. It involves present or previous intimate partners, like a boyfriend/girlfriend, date partner, or spouse, physically, sexually, or psychologically abusing a person (Campbell, 2016). Dating violence thus comes in a variety of forms, including verbal, physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional.

Physical violence is a deliberate use of seen force that has the tendency to result in demise, physically challenged, damage, or other negative outcomes. Sexual abuse is defined as a sexual act that is done or inflicted by another person, without the victim's free will, or against someone who is unable to agree or disagree. Emotional violence is the use of oral and written communication, with the intent to hurt other person psychologically or emotionally and/or exercise control over the other person. This can therefore be in form of threatening acts, such as threatening words, gestures, or weapons to pass across the intention. Technological violence, which includes use of technology to damage intimate partners and control their behaviours, is another form of dating violence (Watkins et al., 2018; Breiding et al., 2015).

The detrimental effects of dating violence, which appears to be common among university students, cannot be overstated. The physical and psychological effects are widely established, and it is likely that their occurrence has an impact on the students' academic performance. DV affects victims, their families, and society at large. It can have a variety of little and elongated term physical and mental health effects (Polychronopoulou & Douzenis, 2016; Alejo, 2014) on the students. Additionally, psychological effects of DV such as behavioural issues, eating and sleep disorders, anxiety disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), self-harm and suicide attempts, drug and/or alcohol dependence, among others, are significantly more prevalent among the students (Sharma, Vatsa, Kalaivani & Bhardwaj, 2019; WHO, 2013). Not only that, health related issue associated with the numerous body systems such as: genitourinary, cardiovascular, neurological, reproductive, musculoskeletal, gastrointestinal, immunological, and endocrine systems have been discovered in DV victims. (Peraica, Petrovi, Bari, Gali & Kozari, 2021). Moreover, it is significant to highlight that, in most of the Nigerian universities, students engage in violent behaviour both as offenders and victims, which reflects the rise in violence in Nigerian society as a whole. More significantly, it appears that the dynamics of abusive dating relationships are different from those of adult partnerships. This is one of the main justifications for the focus of this study, which is dating violence among university undergraduates, especially Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria.

Regarding help-seeking behaviour for dating violence in Nigeria, undergraduate students who perpetrate or suffers from dating violence in Nigeria are not well identified, most likely because they either underreport the occurrence or never seek counseling. Students who engage in dating violence rarely report it to key adults, maybe because of the stage of life they are, their needs for autonomy and their higher reliance on peers. Even if it is reported, the majority of them inform their classmates, but never inform the adults who could assist. Some of these students can even turn to using coping mechanisms rather than seeking help. To this end, it is difficult to comprehend and encourage the help-seeking behaviours of undergraduate students who engage in dating violence, in order to enhance their psychosocial and health outcomes. This implies that the victims of dating violence must seek for help/assistance. Help seeking is therefore the act of finding and accepting support from others (Oluwatosin & Akinwale, 2018). By getting assistance, victims of dating violence can lessen the detrimental effects of the violence as well as their chances of being victims again in the future. It is also crucial to remember that asking for help from others has clear instrumental advantages for the person in need, such as the potential to speed up the resolution of their issue. Basically, when someone asks for help, they may receive one of three types of societal support: (a) psychological support (empathy, warmth, urging, understanding, or commendation). This would greatly aid in resolving issues that might arise during the period of dating; (b) information service (support and counsel to promote problem-solving); advice from adults that have knowledge about healthy dating behaviour may enhance the undergraduate's knowledge of his or her dating partner's personality as well as his or her role as a student. Additionally, the knowledge obtained from the helpers may enhance their ability to moderate their anger and engage in conflict; and (c) instrumental assistance (task assistance and material resource contribution). In this case, undergraduates may require assistance to secure their own safety, lessen the intensity of aggression and wounds, or get medical attention.

In light of this, the primary goal of this study was to examine if there are any gender differences in the undergraduate students at Obafemi Awolowo University, who experience and seek help for dating violence. Sequel to this, the specific objectives of this study are thereby presented below:

Purpose of the study

The study's major objectives are to:

- (i) identify the most common types of dating violence among Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduate students in Ile-Ife, Nigeria;
- (ii) examine the victims' patterns of behavior when seeking assistance;
- (iii) determine the gender difference in the students' experience of dating violence; and
- (iv) ascertain the gender difference in the victims' help seeking behaviour.

Research questions

The following questions were answered.

- (i) What types of dating violence are most common among Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduate students in Ile-Ife, Nigeria?



- (ii) Which type of help-seeking; formal or informal do undergraduates engage in more often?

Research hypotheses

- i. The students' experiences with dating violence do not significantly differ based on their gender.
- ii. The students' behavior in seeking help for dating violence does not exhibit a gender difference.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical evidence on dating violence comes from various studies conducted worldwide, including in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. Research typically involves surveys, interviews, and observational studies to gather data on the prevalence, risk factors, consequences, and interventions related to dating violence. Some key findings from empirical studies on dating violence include:

Prevalence: Studies consistently show that dating violence is a prevalent issue among adolescents and young adults. For example, a study conducted among Nigerian university students found that a significant proportion had experienced dating violence, with physical and emotional abuse being the most common forms. In a countrywide survey conducted in the USA, 9.4% of high school students said their boyfriend or girlfriend had struck, slapped, or physically injured them on purpose in the year before the survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). The survey of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2011), indicated that, with the ages ranging from 11 to 17, one in five women and almost one in seven men who have ever been the victims of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner initially encountered some type of relationship violence. However, given the culture of silence in Nigeria, it appears to be challenging to collect data on dating violence. The social fabric of many dating students, seem to have been menacingly destroyed by dating violence, which is like an erosion threat. This suggests that dating violence is a big issue in universities because it appears to have spread to male and female students of various age groups. This is also an indication that, despite possible underreporting, dating violence happens in universities, even in Nigeria. It may also imply that those who are in violent romantic relationships are more inclined to use insults, profanity, or silent withdrawal to get what they want out of their partners.

Risk factors: Research identifies various risk factors associated with dating violence, including exposure to violence in childhood, substance abuse, low socioeconomic status, traditional gender norms, and relationship conflict. These factors increase the likelihood of both perpetrating and experiencing dating violence.

Consequences: Empirical evidence demonstrates the harmful consequences of dating violence on victims' physical health, mental health, and overall well-being. Victims may experience injuries, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal ideation, and low self-esteem as a result of the abuse.

Protective factors: Studies also identify protective factors that can reduce the risk of dating violence and mitigate its negative effects. These may include supportive family relationships, access to education and resources, positive peer relationships, and resilience-building interventions (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011).

Interventions: Empirical research evaluates various interventions aimed at preventing dating violence and supporting victims. These interventions may include school-based programs, community outreach initiatives, counseling services, legal protections, and advocacy efforts. Evaluations of these interventions provide valuable insights into their effectiveness and areas for improvement (Sharma, Vatsa, Kalaivani & Bhardwaj, 2019; WHO, 2013).

Overall, empirical evidence on dating violence underscores the importance of addressing this issue through comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies. By understanding the factors contributing to dating violence and its impact on individuals and communities, researchers and practitioners can work towards promoting healthy relationships and reducing the prevalence of dating violence.

2.1. Dating violence and help seeking behaviour among university undergraduates

As undergraduates get older, they become better at coming up with hypotheses and forecasting the results of potential solutions, which may or may not be successful. Some people could even turn to the wrong source for assistance, which could make matters worse. It is therefore important to be aware that there are two kind of help sources for dating violence: informal and formal help source. Friends, relatives and those that are not professionals are examples of informal sources of help, whereas doctors, nurses, therapists and counsellors are examples of formal sources of help (Oluwatosin & Akinwale, 2018). Eventually, those who survive from dating violence are more likely to seek informal than formal support, according to studies conducted in North America (Cho & Huang, 2017). For instance, in a recent study on dating violence among college students, just 23% of the sample requested formal assistance while almost 89% of the students sought informal assistance (Cho & Huang, 2017).

The stigma associated with help seeking and the related help-seeking procedure, privacy issues, the value attached to independence, a lack of knowledge of available resources, a lack of self-awareness regarding the necessity for assistance and locus of control (external) are some of the obstacles to undergraduates' help-seeking behaviour. Nevertheless, asking for assistance has many positive effects on a person's wellbeing, including: receiving help during trying periods, which makes one feel less anxious and relieved via shared feelings, discovering way out and coping

mechanisms, gaining perspective, lessening feelings of being isolated and lonely, fostering stronger bonds with relatives and friends, preventing challenges from becoming worse or developing into severe or serious problems; and helping other people in need.

Studies have revealed that undergraduates often do not seek help for problems, which serves to support and prompts the notion behind this study, and even more. Meanwhile, gender has been observed to affect the help-seeking behaviours of those who experience and seek help for dating violence (Oluwatosin & Akinwale, 2018).

2.2. Gender difference in help-seeking for dating violence

Gender is the biological distinction between the roles played by men and women. According to Okoro, Ike and Ologe (2023), gender is a term that is used to denote role-play and responsibilities peculiar to males and, or females in the society. This indicates that there are some socially constructed roles, duties, acquired behaviours, and expectations connected with males and females (Odejobi, 2022), particularly when it comes to dating violence and behaviour that indicates seeking help. It could be noted that females appear to be more susceptible to recurrent maltreatment than their male counterparts when it comes to dating violence (Trevillion, Corker, Capron & Oram, 2016). But some men are just as likely as women to become victims of dating violence, since some men who have experienced domestic violence assert that their female partners utilize various control mechanisms, like "watching their time" or "messaging with other family members." Nevertheless, more female victims tend to report these problems. Unfortunately, some victims may still choose to remain in those relationships, despite the abuse they experience. Some of the justifications given by those DV victims who remained in the abusive relationship (whether males or females) could be: strong psychological and emotional bonds to their partners, socialization, fear of reprisals, dread for the children, emotional and financial reliance, and "the wimp factor". This implies that although both male and female students have the potential to abuse others in romantic relationships, women may eventually be more susceptible to abuse than males (Peraica, Petrović, Barić, Galić & KozarićKovačić, 2021).

Nevertheless, in terms of the gender difference in help-seeking for dating violence, past research shows that more women than men seek help for psychological, physical, or sexual dating violence (Fortin et al., 2012). One could note that more male undergraduates than the females are more likely to display rage and aggression, and prefer to get treatment from informal sources even if they encounter dating violence. In addition, many undergraduate students who experience dating violence may not seek help from adults, peers, families, or communities (informal source). The reason for this could be fear of rejection or disapproval because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as skepticism or dismissive attitudes after disclosing their abusive experiences. Many people may instead look for formal assistance including shelters, programs for transitional living, and advocacy services (Scheer & Baams, 2021).

Ansara and Hindin (2010), for example, found a similar pattern in a population-based sample: almost 81% of women and 57% of men who had suffered physical or sexual relationship violence went to an informal source for assistance, while roughly 64% of women and 32% of men went to an official source. Furthermore, according to Cho and Huang (2017), family and friends are the most frequently mentioned informal forms of assistance, whereas health professionals and counselors are frequently mentioned official sources of assistance (Cho, 2020).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Research design

Survey research methodology was employed in this study. The study was conducted using samples of undergraduates from the selected faculties since it is impossible to reach every undergraduate. The results were then extrapolated to the entire population.

Sample and sampling techniques

At the beginning of the 2021/2022 Harmattan semester, the University had 35,000 students enrolled, according to data published by the University Computer Center. Therefore, 591 undergraduates, which represent 1.7% of the total enrollment at Obafemi Awolowo University, served as the study's sample. Further, 317 females and 274 males made up the sample. The snowball sampling technique was used to select the sample. First, using a simple random selection technique (balloting system), five faculties were selected from among the university's 13 faculties. From each of the chosen faculties, three departments were chosen at random, giving a total of 15 departments. From each department, 40 students were selected using the snowball sampling method.

Research instrument

Data for the study were gathered using an instrument titled "Dating Violence and Help-Seeking Behaviour" (DVHSB). Two lecturers from the department of Educational Foundations and Counseling (both Tests and Measurement and Guidance and Counseling) verified and certified the validity of the instrument. Four components made up the questionnaire. Demographic data, including age, sex, religion, family structure, and recent family status, are included in Section A. Section B included forty items on students' dating violence patterns. Section C included one item on the

categories of dating violence, while Section D comprised eleven items on dating violence help-seeking behavior. 52 items made up the questionnaire, which covers dating violence types, trends, and behaviors related to dating help-seeking. There were structured items in the questionnaire with response patterns ranging from "Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) to Strongly Disagree (SD)", while other things had options from which the respondents had to select.

Data collection

To ensure that there are enough students in the class to whom the questionnaire can be given, the researcher began by entering the classroom as soon as the lecturer in each of the chosen departments or courses left. The researcher made enquiry from some of the students in certain classes to know those who had ever been the victim of dating abuse. The first student to report having experienced it was given the questionnaire by the researcher, and he then directed the student to another who was reporting similar experiences. This continued until each department's allotted number was met. After giving the students ample time to finish the questionnaire, the researcher collected it from them, promising to keep the respondents' answers as private as possible. To preserve the level of confidentiality, the researcher asked the respondents not to write their names on the questionnaire. Five hundred and ninety-five of the 600 administered copies of the questionnaire were recovered from the field by the researcher. Four of the 595 recovered were deemed unfit for submission because they were incomplete, several of the pages had been torn off either at the place of collection or by those who filled the questionnaire. Then, it was determined that 591 copies of the questionnaires were helpful. The procedure of gathering the data therefore took four weeks.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The t-test, frequency counts, and simple percentages were used to examine the data that were gathered.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The main objectives of this study were to determine the most prevalent forms of dating violence among undergraduates of Obafemi Awolowo University; and to examine the gender difference in the help seeking behaviour of the students. One of these findings revealed that the majority of Obafemi Awolowo University's undergraduate students had experienced dating violence, indicating a high prevalence of dating violence. The results of this survey also revealed that emotional dating violence was the most common type of dating violence among the students. This result supports Scheer and Baams' (2021) finding that slightly more than half of their sample reported having been subjected to emotional abuse in the previous year.

The characteristics of the students' stage, the family history, or the environment in which they are raised may have contributed to the high incidence rate of dating violence among them. What this means is that, at the undergraduate level, there is a strong propensity for students to experiment or engage in a variety of dangerous behaviours that could lure them into using violence in their relationships. Also, many undergraduate students who grew up in violent homes or environments, especially those at universities, may not find anything wrong with experiencing abuse in relationships because to their propensity to tolerate it as the norm. In addition, the reason for the prevalence of emotional violence among the students could be that, this form of violence is difficult to repeat and hardly ever detected by a third party. In addition, since it is illegal for students to fight or engage in physical altercations, they could turn to psychological abuse as a way to cope with their issues. Emotional abuse, which often starts with verbal threats to punch or hurl something at the partner, can escalate into physical violence such as pinching, shoving, or striking the spouse with a hand, fist, or other hard object (Campbell, 2016). In light of this, supportive words from educators and counselors—who undoubtedly understand the advantages and disadvantages of dating violence—can significantly aid students—victims or offenders—in recovering from the pain caused by dating violence and may even help stop it from happening in the first place. Teachers are also encouraged to spend time getting to know, care about, and comprehend their students. Thus, early prevention programs ought to begin when individuals are still in school age and before their behaviors become ingrained. Furthermore, it is wrong to support rather than condone acts of emotional, sexual, or physical aggression against young people. Aside that, the victims should not be held responsible by society, with the assumption that they (the victims) asked for the experience, or should not be in a relationship.

Regarding the gender differences in the students' experiences of dating violence, it was found that girls committed physical dating violence at a higher rate than boys, however some female students claimed to have used violence in self-defense or as payback for physical violence they had experienced from men. Nevertheless, females typically prefer verbal conflict (emotional abuse) or appealing to their partners' senses in most cases. But when men are irritated, they tend to prefer alternative types of physical abuse, such as hitting and leaving scars on their partners. Because they are more adaptive and flexible and give their all to every relationship they enter, including their trust, minds, and lives, it follows that female students are more susceptible to dating violence (victimization) than male students (Oluwatosin & Akinwale, 2018).

Moreover, the percentages of undergraduates who sought help for dating violence from each of informal and formal sources of help were investigated and compared. Based on the students' responses, the percentage of people who turn to informal sources (friends, parents, siblings, and other family members) for assistance is higher than the number of people who turn to official sources. It was further indicated that female students were more likely than male students to seek out official sources of assistance. Thus, it was found that the students' formal and informal help-seeking behaviors differed significantly based on their gender. Boys and girls, meanwhile, reported needing assistance in comparable proportions; the only difference being that more women than men stated they would discuss the situation with formal sources of assistance including teachers, counselors, and health care providers. This shows that, females are more susceptible to emotion, and are frequently the victim; being helpless and culturally or socially expected to succumb to men, or unable to stand up for themselves. On the contrary, males are more likely to keep their dating violence experience to themselves, thinking telling others about how they have been treated by females or asking for help portray them as being weak as well as not exhibiting true masculinity. In addition, there were clear gender differences: females thought school nurses, police, counselors, and lawyers were more helpful than boys. In other words, more males than females said they preferred getting help from informal sources like friends, family, the internet, and other informal sources, while more females said they preferred getting help from formal sources like counselors, doctors, teachers, and other formal sources (Cho & Huang, 2017).

Boys need to feel understood and cared for by the person they confide in, and they also need to feel linked to and trusted by them, so they might not seek out official sources of aid as frequently. In addition, the male students who would have discussed relationship violence with their teachers chose not to do so because they were afraid that the teachers would bring up the matter with counselors, their families, or other staff members, which could have gotten out of hand (fear of stigma also relates to fears regarding the confidentiality of professional services). As a result, they favor asking friends or the internet for assistance. Besides this, a good number of the male respondents also said they would try to resolve the issue on their own, and this could reveal a gender difference in help seeking. Furthermore, it's possible that a large number of these students have a negative perception of law enforcement personnel; they may not trust them and think that the police, other law enforcement personnel, and emergency response providers don't care about them. The students said they were unlikely to see any action done unless they had hard evidence of their mistreatment and that the police would not consider their complaint seriously because they are still young people. It is therefore noteworthy that students' behaviour in seeking help for dating violence was significantly influenced or differed by gender.

In sum, the current research indicates that there is a gender difference in the level at which undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University experience dating violence and their attitudes towards help-seeking. In light of this, supportive remarks from educators and counselors—who undoubtedly possess an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of dating violence—can significantly aid students who have experienced it in overcoming their trauma and potentially avert it altogether. Teachers are also encouraged to get to know their kids extremely well and show them care in order to forge stronger bonds with them.

Table

The Table titles are shown in a systematic manual like Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, and others. Table labeling (name) should be on top (centered) while Table labeling (name) should be below (centered).

Table 1: Types of dating violence experienced by students

	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Physical Violence	51	8.6
Sexual Violence	117	19.8
Psychological Violence	423	71.6
Total	591	100.0

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

Table 1 above was examined using the cluster analysis method, and it was found that 117 (19.8%) individuals had experienced sexual abuse, 423 (71.6%) had experienced emotional abuse, and 51 (8.6%) individuals had experienced physical abuse. This shows that among undergraduates at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, emotional abuse is more prevalent than other forms of dating violence that have been reported among them.

Table 2: Informal and Formal Resources for Requesting Assistance

	Frequency(F)	Percentage (%)
Formal Source (calling the police, talking to a lawyer, counsellor, professor, lecturer, coach, advisor, doctor or health practitioner, to know what to do).	265	44.8
Informal Source (talking to a friend to help, discussing any dating violence experience with parent or relatives, revealing the problem, asking for assistance online (online conversation), keeping one's identity hidden, and making a decision based only on one's viewpoint.	326	55.2
Total	591	100.0

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

According to Table 2, 265 (44.8%) undergraduates engaged in formal help-seeking whereas 326 (55.2%) engaged in informal help-seeking. This suggests that a higher proportion of the university students who experience dating violence engage in informal help-seeking behaviour.

Table 3: Gender difference in undergraduates' experience of dating violence

Gender	DV			Total	t test			Yates Continuity correction		
	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Emotional Abuse		t	df	p	t	df	P
Male	18(6.6%)	55(20.1%)	201(73.4%)	274(100%)	.079	1	0.024	3.316	1	0.039
Female	33(10.4%)	62(19.6%)	222 (70.0%)	317(100%)						
Total	51(8.6%)	117(19.8%)	423 (71.6%)	591(100%)						

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

The gender difference in the respondents' experiences of dating violence is shown in Table 3. The t-test statistic, as indicated in the table, was -0.079 at $p = 0.024$. Since this result is less than the 0.05 cutoff, the null hypothesis is rejected. The obtained t-test statistic was 3.316 at $P = 0.039$, meaning that the p-value is still below the 0.05 criterion even after applying Yates continuity adjustment. Thus, it may be concluded that the respondents' experiences of dating violence vary significantly based on their gender.

Table 4: Gender difference in undergraduates' help seeking behaviour for dating violence

Sex	HSB		Total	t test			Yates Continuity correction		
	Informal	Formal		t	df	p	t	df	P
Female	174 (54.9%)	143(45.1%)	317(100.0%)	.144	1	0.000	11.720	1	.001
Male	152(55.5%)	122(44.5%)	274(100.0%)						
Total	326(55.2%)	265(44.8%)	591(100.0%)						

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

The gender differences in how people seek help when faced with dating violence are seen in Table 4. The t-test statistic, as indicated in the Table, was 12.295 at $p = 0.000$. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 cutoff, the hypothesis was rejected rather than accepted. Additionally, with a value of 11.720 at $p = 0.001$, the t-test result failed to reach the 0.05 criterion even after using the Yates continuity adjustment. Thus, it may be inferred that there is a sizable gender disparity in the students' informal and formal help-seeking behaviours during instances of dating violence.

6. CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The importance of this study cannot be over emphasized. It provided information on the patterns of adolescents' help seeking behaviour for dating violence among undergraduates, based on gender (male and female). This is necessary as it enables the professionals, lecturers and other stakeholders to handle undergraduates properly. School counsellors will also know when and how to give information about dating acts, its consequences and when to seek for help. Moreover,

this study provided information on the forms and prevalence of dating violence among the students of Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Osun State. Also, the information provided will enable the education planners to address the implementation of curriculum that will address dating and relationship. As far as parents are concerned, the findings are useful in making them know how to relate with the adolescents who are seen as victims or perpetrators.

Furthermore, the peer group provides a standard by which individuals can measure themselves during the transition from reliance on the family to relative independence. It is of great importance that undergraduates who interact reasonably well with their peers will be socially adjusted and effective in their functions. This study will help adolescents to be properly informed about the nitty-gritty of dating and develop accurate, rational and responsible attitude and behaviour towards issues about dating. And also build up adolescent's knowledge towards self-understanding and healthy relationships.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The implications of this study are multifaceted. It shed more light on cultural norms and expectations surrounding help-seeking behaviours regarding dating violence. Additionally, it gave insight into gender roles, social stigma and highlighted potential barriers faced by individuals particularly undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria, in reporting incidents of dating violence, as well as accessing support services, informing interventions and support systems for the victims of dating violence.

8. CONCLUSION

According to this study, dating violence is more common among undergraduates because dating violence occurs throughout the period, which is particularly dangerous. The majority of victims of dating violence report experiencing emotional abuse as their primary form of victimization. As a result, rather than turning to experts, who are considered formal sources, those who sought help for dating violence turned to friends and family, who are considered informal sources. On the other hand, this could be the cause of the underreporting and the wait for official sources, like counseling services. The study also came to the conclusion that a student's gender may have an impact on how they experience dating violence and how they seek assistance. This is due to the fact that more female victims than male victims who opted for formal sources of assistance sought assistance, particularly from formal sources of help.

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